

## ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A composition which elicits antibodies to greater than 95%, and even greater than 99%, of the known variants of HIV-1 Tat protein contains at least one peptide or polypeptide of the formula of Epitope I (based on amino acids 2-10 of HIV-1 Tat consensus sequence) and optionally one or more of a peptide or polypeptide of Epitope II (based on amino acids 41 to 51 of that sequence), of Epitope III (based on amino acids 52-62 of that sequence), or of Epitope IV (based on amino acids 62 through 72 of that sequence with a C-terminal Pro). Vaccinal and pharmaceutical compositions can contain the antibodies induced by the peptide compositions for use in passive therapy. Diagnostic compositions and uses are described for assessing the immune status of vaccinated patients.

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